
INFORMAL STAFF REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

SUBJECT:

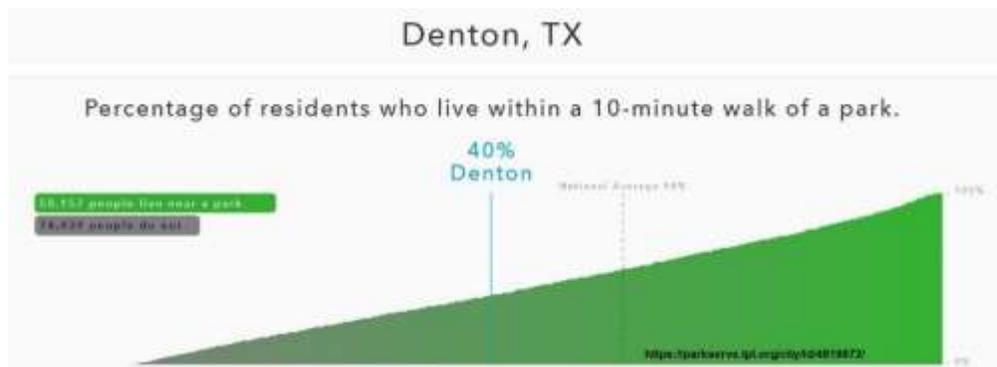
In November, City Council Member, Keely Briggs requested more information regarding the 10-Minute Walk Campaign.

BACKGROUND:

On December 19, 2018, and January 16, 2019, Parks and Recreation staff met with members from the Trust For Public Land (TPL) Dallas and Boston Office to learn more about the program and how Denton could get involved.

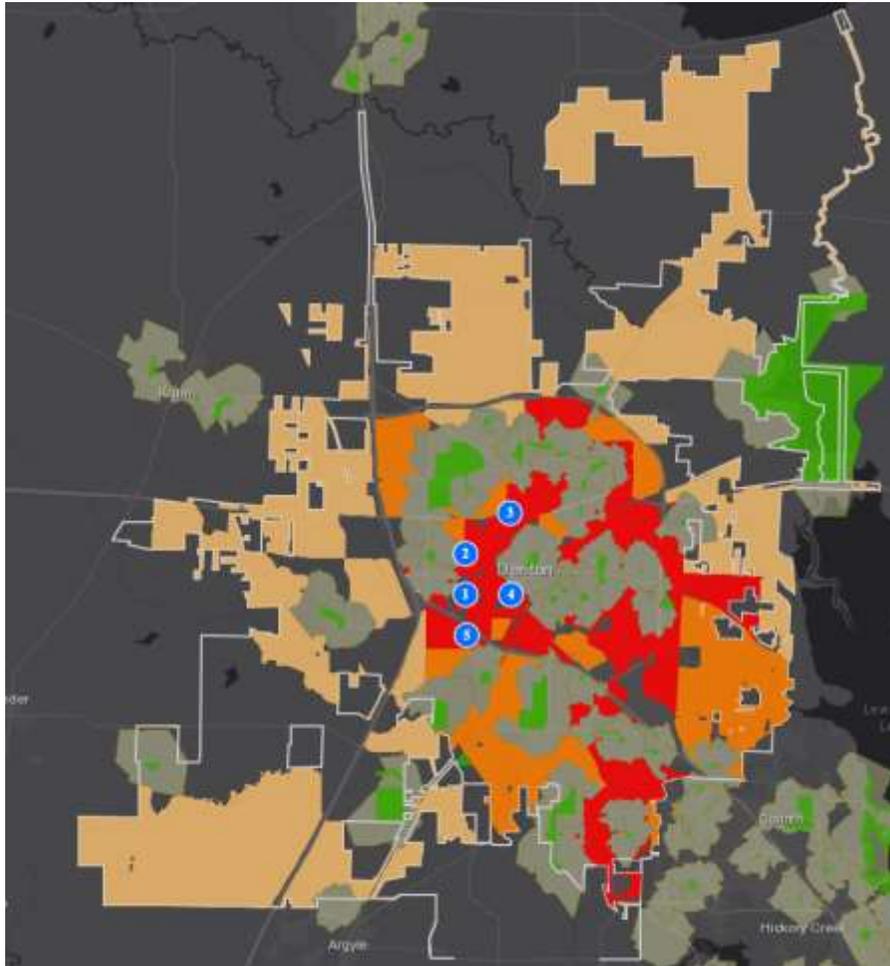
TPL, The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) are leading a nationwide movement to ensure there is a park within a 10-minute walk (1/2 mile) of every person, in every neighborhood, in every city across America. Over 300 communities have already come together to support the 10-Minute Walk campaign to increase equitable park access and quality through local policy changes, master planning efforts, and increased funding.

Parks provide and support the physical, social, environmental, and economic health of a community and cities nationwide. One in three Americans does not have a park within a 10-minute walk (or half-mile) of their home. According to The Trust for Public Land ParkServe database (www.parkserve.org), only 40% Denton residents (50,157 people) have a park or trail within a 10-minute walk of where they live. This means that approximately 74,000 Denton residents do not have a park or trail within walking distance of their home. The national average of Americans with similar access to a park space within a 10-minute walk from their home is 54%. An immediate goal for the City of Denton could be to work toward attaining the national average of accessibility for residents.



TPL created the ParkServe.org website platform to measure and analyze current access to parks in cities, towns, and communities nationwide. This new comprehensive standardized database provides communities with helpful data to examine their city park space using the US Census,

ESRI, and various other data sources. Park property that is utilized for the analysis includes publicly owned local and state parks and trails, school parks with a joint-use agreement, and privately owned parks opened for full public use. Properties not included are golf courses, cemeteries, and HOA parks. Staff will be working with TPL to make sure park spaces are accurate within the data set that is being utilized. More information on the methodology can be viewed at <https://parkserve.tpl.org/methodology/>.



MAP: TPL Park Access Map from www.ParkServe.org. Red and orange areas of the map are parts of Denton that do not have access to a park within a 10-minute walk. Blue-numbered dots are the top five locations in Denton where establishing new parks would have the largest impact on park access for the City.

The 10-minute walk campaign calls on communities to demonstrate their commitment to parks to inspire them to adopt long-term, system-wide strategies to improve equitable access to quality parks. A 10-minute walk campaign commitment is a public statement how a city will work towards ensuring that residents have a park within a 10-minute walk from their home. These commitments should be developed to promote a sustainable, evidence and practice-based approach

to improve equitable access to parks. The commitment and goals set need to be realistic and attainable both in time and financial abilities.

Below is a list of examples of 10-Minute Walk commitments from other cities. More information on city pledges can be found at <https://www.10minutewalk.org/#Mayors>.

- **Lewisville, Texas** (Population 102,000; 61% in 10-Minute Walk) A suburb of Dallas, Lewisville is making strides to have equitable 10-minute walk access to parks. A community with a high population of immigrants and refugees, the city will be partnering with Chin Community Ministries, the Youth Action Council, and Keep Lewisville Beautiful, to engage community members in assessing walkability and access to parks. By 2025, Lewisville is committed to increasing the percentage of residents living within a 10-minute walk to a park to 85% through Small Area Plans, a Parkland Dedication Ordinance, and agreements with public and private entities that emphasizes accessibility in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) areas and small area plan.
- **Austin, Texas** (Population 856,500; 54% in 10-Minute Walk) The Texas capital is working to ensure that all residents have access to high-quality parks within a 5-minute walk inside the urban core of the city and a 10-minute walk outside the urban core. By July 2023, Austin will implement strategies that provide parks through multiple methods: future acquisitions, activating undeveloped parkland, and creating cross-sectional partnerships to leverage funding for new parks.
- **Chattanooga, Tennessee** (Population 175,000; 36% in 10-Minute Walk) A city surrounded by natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities, Chattanooga is focusing its efforts on residents who do not have access to these great amenities. By Summer 2020, Chattanooga will develop a park master plan that establishes and analyzes baseline metrics for 10-minute walk park access and park quality, ensuring that data and analysis includes under-represented populations and prioritizes improved streets, sidewalks, trails, and other infrastructure to ensure safe connections to parks and to address barriers to access and use.

DISCUSSION

In order to help make a movement in improving our accessibility of parks to our residents, staff have identified some immediate opportunities that could be explored that will contribute to an improvement in accessibility to park land that are outlined in a suggested “Action Plan Strategy”.

Proposed Denton Parks and Recreation 10-Minute Walk Action Plan Strategy:

1. **Select an attainable 10-Minute Walk goal and specific action.**
 - Per TPL, on average approximately 2,000 people live within a 10-minute walk of each of Denton’s 33 parks and trails. If developed in the right location, establishing 8-10 new parks or trails would provide park access to an additional 16,000 – 20,000 people, enough to bring Denton up to the national average of 54% park access.
 - *Suggested Goal: Work toward 54% accessibility (national average) of park land to Denton residents*

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2. Develop a measurement strategy that outlines what success looks like and how we will track our progress.
 - Since purchasing and developing land is challenging and requires significant funding, staff will be pursuing a number of initiatives that will improve accessibility with minimal financial resources. These key focus areas will be attaining cooperative agreements with schools, HOAs, and working with neighborhood developments to expand parks and recreational opportunities.
 - *Suggested Measurement: 8-10 spaces identified and/or developed as park space that can be accessed by the public.*
 - Educational providers - Work with the Denton Independent School District, UNT, TWU and private schools to identify possible opportunities to develop cooperative agreements on school property where the community could use the playgrounds, fields and open space for recreational play during non-school hours.
 - HOA – Identify accessible HOA communities in Denton that have a park, and work with HOAs to develop an agreement for public use of their park.
 - Railroad and utility easements – Work with institutional landowners, such as Denton Municipal Electric, to establish trails following their rights-of-way.
 - Private developers – Identification and improvement of the placement of park land to make sure land is located correctly and suitable for an acceptable park design, playability and accessibility.
 - Locate under-utilized City property that can be improved, enhanced or developed to provide community recreational needs.
 - Identify potential land for future park, preservation and open space during the update of the Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan.
 3. Select a realistic date within the next 5-years for completing our commitment.
 - *Suggested Target Date: April 2024.*

What would happen next? If City Council was interested in considering moving forward with the initiative the following steps would be completed:

- A resolution of support will be presented to City Council for adoption at a future City Council meeting.
- Finalize an Action Plan Strategy.
- Staff will work with TPL and make sure all GIS maps are accurate and accounting for all applicable park spaces.
- If a commitment is made by the City of Denton, the campaign will review the proposal and may contact the point of contact with any questions.
- The point of contact and Mayor Watts will receive a confirmation email with the commitment.
- The commitment will be publicized on www.10minutewalk.org and Denton will be recognized in an annual national press release. Additional media opportunities may be

available, and the campaign will work with select cities to help them publicize their commitments.

- The campaign will monitor our commitment progress every 6-months through a short survey, and we will be asked to submit a final verification on the date of completion indicated in the city commitment.

Below is a list of possible key city initiatives to be considered that are provided by www.10minutewalk.org that could be integrated into city planning and initiatives.

- Develop and demonstrate broad-based support for the 10-minute walk campaign.
- Create a coalition of cross-sectoral partners to support the campaign.
- Engage the community to ensure all voices, including those historically under-represented, are represented throughout the campaign.
- Establish, adopt, and analyze baseline metrics for 10-minute walk, accessibility and park quality.
- Identify priority areas and actions based on findings from your assessed metrics and analysis.
- Incorporate 10-minute walk campaign goals into citywide planning documents.
- Identify funding to sustain continued investment in parks, operations, programming, and connections.
- Program and maintain parks to ensure quality, use, and community support.
- Improve streets, sidewalks, trails, and other infrastructure to ensure safe connections to parks and to address barriers to access and use.
- Redevelop and maintain parks to be high-quality spaces that reflect the spirit of the community to maximize health, environmental, and social benefits.
- Build new parks, leverage existing public land, and supporting best land use around parks.

The Parks and Recreation Department is currently planning to use the “10-minute walk” as a measuring tool or development standard when identifying where public park spaces should be placed. This measuring tool will be used when trying to identify land needs during the planning of park land development. This standard is not a requirement, but a measuring tool for staff and community leaders when determining if land should be purchased and/or developed. This will be a helpful standard as the city begins the redevelopment of the Parks, Recreation and Trail System Master Plan in 2019.

*PARD is working with TPL to make sure Denton parks are accurate with the data set used.

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